

Bhutan The only “climate negative” country

April 13, 2010 · Filed Under editorial ·

We may top the list amongst countries as the one that keeps historians busy by changing global history frequently.

The last time we did this was when we became the world’s youngest democracy.

Yesterday, we added another chapter by becoming the only country amongst 194 United Nation member countries to formally declare ourselves as “climate negative” . We are today the only country that take in or soak more green house gases than we emit.

The timing could not be better, for our Prime Minister has left for Japan. With justifiable pride, our Prime Minister can tell the people of Japan why we are a special country.

However, can we maintain our position as a climate negative or a carbon neutral country?

We ought to be realistic. Looking at the pace of development, which is bound to accelerate considering the Economic Development Plan (EDP) and the increased use of fossil fuels, we may fall down the rung.

And it may not take long.

According to the Road Safety and Transport Authority (RSTA), the number of vehicles has been increasing by more than 17% a year. A record 45,000 vehicles are registered in the country today of which 25,000 are in Thimphu alone. And adding to it, more than 66% of petrol vehicles and 96% of diesel vehicles do not meet the Indian emission standards.

Cars have become a necessity for our children would rather stay at home than walk to school. Parents buy cars to ensure that children go to school.

The Government is not just watching. Public transport has been introduced and there are plans to make our towns bicycle friendly.

But these are just plans and we do not know if we would welcome the bicycle plan.

A silver lining is a sentence from the EDP which states that the Government would “explore the establishment of rope ways or cable car network in ecologically sensitive areas, remote areas and to tourist destinations to minimize the impact from road construction.”

The Government restricts and confines the exploration to ecologically sensitive areas, tourist destinations and remote areas. Perhaps, there are reasons for doing so.

However, if we are to maintain our stand as a carbon neutral country, rope ways or cable cars will definitely aid us. We do have another measure enshrined in our constitution; the provision to maintain 60% forest coverage. But this may not be enough to take in all the green house gases if use of fossil fuels increases at the current rate.

The Government needs to begin exploring the feasibility of ropeways.

We could do away the tunnels for some time.